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TAGS: [IS KMDR MEDIA REACTION REPORT](#)
SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

- [1. Tsunami](#)
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Key stories in the media:

All media cited assessments that the casualty toll of the tidal waves in South Asia has reached 60,000 or even 70,000, and cited UN officials as saying that it could rise as high as 100,000. Leading media quoted Secretary of State Colin Powell as saying Tuesday that

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the U.S. "will do more" to help the victims of the tsunamis. Powell also said that he regretted a

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statement by a UN official suggesting that it had not helped enough. Israel Radio reported this morning that the U.S. boosted its aid to tsunami-stricken countries to USD 35 million. Depending on the sources, the media reported that there is concern for the lives of 15 to 100 Israelis who were in the hit region. Israel Radio this morning reported that the Thai authorities have reported on two Israeli casualties. Foreign Ministry D-G Ron Prosor said in an interview with Israel Radio this morning that 150 Israelis are still unaccounted for. Although all media reported that Sri Lanka turned down the visit of an Israeli rescue team, and that an Israeli plan carrying 80 tons of food and medical supplies worth USD 100,000 was set to depart for Sri Lanka this morning, Jerusalem Post reported that the Vatican's newspaper, L'Osservatore Romano, called for "a radical and dramatic change of perspective" among people "too often preoccupied with making war," and that it singled out Israeli military leaders for declining a request for emergency medical help.

All media reported that the government suffered a serious blow on Tuesday when the Knesset's Constitution, Law and Justice Committee failed to approve the bill for the "evacuation and compensation" of settlers from the Gaza Strip and the northern West Bank. The committee's vote on the bill resulted in an 8-8 tie, with Israeli Arab MK Azmi Bishara (Balad) abstaining. The vote is likely to delay the disengagement process by a few weeks. Leading media reported that Tuesday settlers from the northern West Bank community of Sa-Nur prevented members of the Disengagement Administration from entering their settlement. They had to force their way into Sa-Nur. Jerusalem Post quoted Pinchas Wallerstein, a senior member of the Yesha Council of Jewish Settlements in the Territories, as saying Tuesday that settler leaders are considering making an official appeal to Diaspora Jews to travel and join the fight against the evacuation of the Gaza Strip. Israel Radio reported that activists of the outlawed Kach movement have handed out leaflets showing Jews being led in trains to the death camps. The Yesha Council of Jewish Settlements in the Territories condemned the leaflets. The radio reported that the Yesha leaders will meet today with Acting Justice Minister Tzipi Livni in order to convince her of the "illegality" of the disengagement plan.

Jerusalem Post cited a denial by Gush Katif (Katif Bloc) farmers Tuesday that they are in the midst of indirect negotiations with the Disengagement Administration to receive plots of land in the western Negev in exchange for fields they will leave behind under the disengagement plan.

This morning, Israel Radio reported that two IDF soldiers escorting a civilian convoy were wounded in a shooting attack in the West Bank town of Baka El-Sharkiya, next to the Green Line. The media quoted Palestinian sources as saying that Tuesday an IAF drone carrying two Hamas militants near the southern Gaza Strip town of Khan Yunis. The militants, who escaped unharmed, were apparently on their way to carry out an attack in Gaza.

Jerusalem Post reported that, facing an upsurge in lawlessness and anarchy, the PA is preparing to deploy a special force in the Gaza Strip to fight local criminal gangs, but not Hamas.

Yediot quoted Sharon as saying at a meeting with Israel's ambassadors to the European countries on Tuesday: "Nobody has the right to determine how much security Israel requires. Tell it to the Europeans forcefully. We don't owe anything to anyone, only to the Almighty." Maariv quoted Sharon as saying at the meeting: "Europe won't take part in the diplomatic process with the Palestinians, because it doesn't have a balanced approach."

Jerusalem Post quoted visiting Sen. Joseph Lieberman (D-CT) as saying Tuesday that Yasser Arafat's death has led to an improvement in U.S.-Palestinian ties, but that this upswing is conditional on the PA stopping terror.

Citing AP, Jerusalem Post quoted Syrian FM Farouk Shara as saying Tuesday that Israel is to blame for the deadlock in peace talks between the two countries, citing Israel's rejection of Damascus's recent overtures.

Yated Ne'eman reported that Egyptian FM Ahmed Abu el-Gheit has urged Israel to pull out from all Palestinian cities it entered in 2000.

Leading Internet service Ynet reported that the Iranian Broadcasting Authority has launched a well-informed Hebrew news site that includes items and articles on world and Israeli events.

Jerusalem Post reported that next week Knesset Speaker Reuven Rivlin is likely to declare Shinui party leader MK Yosef (Tommy) Lapid opposition leader.

Maj. Gen Yiftah Ron-Tal, the head of the IDF Ground Services, was quoted as saying in an interview with Jerusalem Post that the Defense Ministry should boost production of the Merkava IV tank. The newspaper also quoted him as saying that women of Machsom Watch, a group that monitors soldiers' behavior at roadblocks, should be replaced with IDF officers.

Visiting Egyptian journalist and historian Ali Salem was quoted as saying in an interview with Ha'aretz that "Israel has joined the Middle East" following the signing of the free-trade agreement with Egypt. Salem, who was persecuted in Egypt following his first visit to Israel in 1994, made similar remarks in interviews with Yediot and Maariv. Ynet and Yated Ne'eman quoted Jordanian journalist Shaker Nabulsi at saying at the "New Media in the Middle East" conference held at Ben Gurion University that Arab satellite media are a primary factor in the encouragement of terror.

Citing AP, Ha'aretz quoted PM Sharon as saying Tuesday that he has accepted an invitation to visit China. The newspaper says that the expected visit could be overshadowed by friction over a snagged Israeli-Chinese weapons deal.

Citing AP, Ha'aretz reported that Turkish FM Abdullah Gul will travel to Israel next week.

Jerusalem Post reported that members of Ethiopia's Falash Mura community have accused a Jewish-American aid group, the North American Conference on Ethiopian Jewry (NACOEJ), of running a Mafia-like operation at its compounds in Addis Ababa and Gondar, where some 15,000 to 17,000 Falash Mura await permission to immigrate to Israel.

1. Tsunami:

Summary:

Conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized (December 29): "The enormous loss of life around the Indian Ocean rim is partly a human failure too."

Veteran op-ed writer and the late prime minister Yitzhak Rabin's assistant Eytan Haber opined in the lead editorial of mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: "Even if there are some hitches here and there, it seems that there are few countries in the world that come to the aid of their citizens the way Israel does."

Block Quotes:

I. "South Asia and Us"

Conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized (December 29): "The enormous loss of life around the Indian Ocean rim is partly a human failure too.... South Asian nations are not anywhere as affluent [as the U.S. and Japan], which is their excuse for having wasted so much time postponing expenditure on tsunami alert devices. They couldn't even agree on whether these are worthwhile.... Lest we too patronizingly criticize others, however, we should pay attention to natural menaces of our own. We must not ignore our dangers as the countries of South Asia ignored theirs.... Experts warn [Israel] to expect a major quake (above 7 on the Richter Scale) sometime within the next 50 years. It could happen any day and, if of a devastating magnitude and in a lethally close location, no part of the country would be safe.... But talk and blueprints are no substitute for action.... Yes, dispensing more than advice costs money -- and we have more pressing needs. So, too, did India, Indonesia et al.... We can't be sure when the next quake will come. We can determine how prepared we are to survive it."

II. "Our Finest Hour"

Veteran op-ed writer and the late prime minister Yitzhak Rabin's assistant Eytan Haber opined in the lead editorial of mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (December 29): "Even if there are some hitches here and there, it seems that there are few countries in the world that come to the aid of their citizens the way Israel does. The great America shrugs its shoulders. France drowns in champagne and frog legs as the screens show appalling sights. Oy, they say, and move on to their business. Not us...The Americans have 1,000 workers in their embassy in Thailand, and it is easy for them to get organized and send five of them to the airport to welcome arrivals. Israel has six workers, and they have to stretch themselves thin. Albeit the concern of those rescued and their families is understandable, and the strain that is part of their lives at this time justifies their outbursts and rage, but when the storm abates, they too will realize that it is not exactly the job of the State of Israel to find their children who have gone on a trip, and all its actions in its handling and rescuing Israelis are a 'bonus' to Israeli citizens simply because they are Israeli. There is (almost) no other country like this in the world."

12. Mideast:

Summary:

Conservative contributor Gerald M. Steinberg, Editor of NGO Monitor and Director of the Program on Conflict Management at Bar-Ilan University wrote in conservative, independent Jerusalem Post: "Like other powerful organizations, HRW [Human Rights Watch] and its leaders should be subject to a system of checks and balances."

Block Quotes:

"Human Rights: Watching the Watchers"

Conservative contributor Gerald M. Steinberg, Editor of NGO Monitor and Director of the Program on Conflict Management at Bar-Ilan University wrote in conservative, independent Jerusalem Post (December 29): "In the past four years, despite terror attacks that clearly violate any common-sense concept of basic human

rights, HRW's [Human Rights Watch] reports and press releases have focused -- by a ratio of over six to one -- on allegations against Israel.... In September 2001, HRW emerged as a key player during the nongovernmental organization sessions of the infamous Durban anti-racism conference, which were hijacked to demonize Israel.... Like other powerful organizations, HRW and its leaders should be subject to a system of checks and balances to ensure that the claimed objectives -- moral and otherwise -- are consistent with the choice of issues, the presentation of evidence, and the hiring process.... Perhaps in this way the lost moral force of the human rights movement, reflecting exploitation of universal principles in support of private political biases, can also be repaired."

13. Pakistan: Nuclear Program:

Summary:

Defense commentator Reuven Pedhazur opined in independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz: "There should be no reliance ... on the American determination to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons. Israel must prepare for 'a New Middle East' in which it will no longer be the sole nuclear player."

Block Quotes:

"Pakistan's Immunity"

Defense commentator Reuven Pedhazur opined in independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (December 29): "All eyes are set on Iran, which is trying to dupe the Europeans and carry on with its plans to produce nuclear weapons, but the truth is that the more immediate threat for the acceleration of nuclear proliferation can be found nearby, in Pakistan.... The immunity enjoyed by [Dr. Abdel-Kader] Khan, [who was arrested by the Pakistan authorities on suspicion of running a clandestine international ring for the sale of nuclear technology and later pardoned by Pervez Musharraf] is rooted in the dependency that the Bush administration has developed in the form of Pakistan's president, who has been an important ally in the war the Americans are waging against international terrorism, and especially the hunt for Osama Bin Laden in Afghanistan.... With this attitude, the U.S. administration is in fact preventing the clearing of the air surrounding Khan's nuclear dealings, and does not allow the tracking of the path of proliferation that he paved around the world.... The Khan affair proves once more that even when the more sophisticated intelligence agencies seek to follow the nuclear activities of various countries, they fail over and over again.... In Israel the affair needs to raise a number of alarms. A significant portion of Khan's clients are in the Middle East, and it is possible that Iran is not the sole country in the region with a nuclear weapons program.... The lesson is that there should be no reliance on the IAEA to tackle the problem and not even on the American determination to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons. Israel must prepare for 'a New Middle East' in which it will no longer be the sole nuclear player."

14. Iraq:

Summary:

President of the Federation of Israeli Chambers of Commerce and former Likud Knesset member Uriel Lynn wrote in popular, pluralist Maariv: "In my opinion, Bush will be well remembered in history and actually earn esteem for starting a war against Iraq."

Block Quotes:

"Determination Against Tyranny"

President of the Federation of Israeli Chambers of Commerce and former Likud Knesset member Uriel Lynn wrote in popular, pluralist Maariv (December 29): "In my opinion, Bush will be well remembered in history and actually earn esteem for starting a war against Iraq.... Every knowledgeable person in the Western world should have felt revulsion facing the possibility that a dictator such as Saddam Hussein could gain control of nuclear weapons. Like Hitler, Saddam saw no value in human life. International weapons inspections

cannot be carried out forever. The war held back a process of clear and present danger to large populations around the world.... Bush had to make the decision of going to war in particularly difficult conditions: he faced an antagonistic Europe ... divided media at home, and sharp opposition by part of his country's population. But the free world will have much more to thank Bush for his decision, since he set a barrage against murderous tyranny, which always seeks to work beyond its country's boundaries."

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